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Plumbing the ocean's depths for 59 years

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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY FRATTAROLI, CHRISTOPHER SHEAFF AND STEVEN MASUCH

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VENUS portal gives a look underwater

Live oceanographic data and images are now available online to researchers and the public

by Anna Czolpinksi and Steven Masuch

The Victoria Experimental Network Under the Sea (VENUS) opened a portal on June 22 to the underwater world by providing Internet users, both researchers and the public, with live data from the ocean floor through the project's website.

"The VENUS project represents the next generation of cable-to-ocean observatories and is really the most advanced system on the planet at the moment," said Richard Dewey, project science coordinator for the VENUS team.

VENUS consists of an underwater network of instrument platforms, which are connected to UVic and the Internet by fibre optic cable.

The instruments measure several aspects of the environment, including electrical conductivity, temperature, pressure and salinity. The website allows users to view trends in these variables over different time periods such as the last 24 hours, the past week, month or even year.

For the recording of sound under the water, from marine mammal communication to boat noises, the VENUS node in the Saanich Inlet has a hydrophone array. Made up of three hydrophones, the array can detect sounds between seven hertz and 100 kilohertz.

As VENUS nodes collect data over time, researchers will be able to compare data recorded at different periods and find trends. This is especially helpful for research (for example, climate studies) that requires long-term trend tracking.

"Very often data sets from a scientific perspective only become truly valuable when they become longer in term and one is able to put the data into perspective," said Dewey. "[It is when] we start collecting data more regularly and routinely that we gain immense understanding into various processes."

The VENUS observatory is also capable of recording high-resolution still images and low-resolution video using a digital camera attached to the platform. Researchers are able to schedule use of the camera for their individual needs, but due to the changes the camera's light causes on the underwater environment, it will not be available for the public to control.

"One of the things about this project that we're trying to do is to make sure that everyone has the same sort of access to the data as the researchers. So it's a slightly unusual project, as everything is very public," said Don Moffat, VENUS web specialist.

"The nature of oceanography, and I am convinced about this," said Dewey, "is that it is inherently intuitive and accessible to everyone. It is like the weather—you do not have to be a meteorologist to understand that it is hot, dry, wet or cold. Anyone can really appreciate environmental conditions, and the ocean is no different."

Behind the information found on the VENUS site, there's an extensive system of hardware and software designed to collect data.

In terms of hardware, the VENUS project is made up of a network of cables and measurement instruments, which will eventually be installed in several locations. The first node and the three-kilometre network of fibre optic cable were installed 93 metres under the waters of the Saanich Inlet north of Victoria and started collecting data in February. Two more locations, still to be constructed, will be in the Fraser River Delta and in the deeper waters of the Strait of Georgia.

One of the most useful aspects of the VENUS project software is that it stores all the collected data in one place, the Data Management and Archive System (DMAS).

DMAS was developed for the VENUS and NEPTUNE projects and is managed by a team of UVic computer scientists, programmers and database specialists. It provides access to instrument data in real time and an archive system that can collect and store data for decades, while still being accessible on demand.

In the past, scientists recorded the data they required on an individual basis and stored it using their own personal systems. There was no central database that contained all the information collected by the researchers.

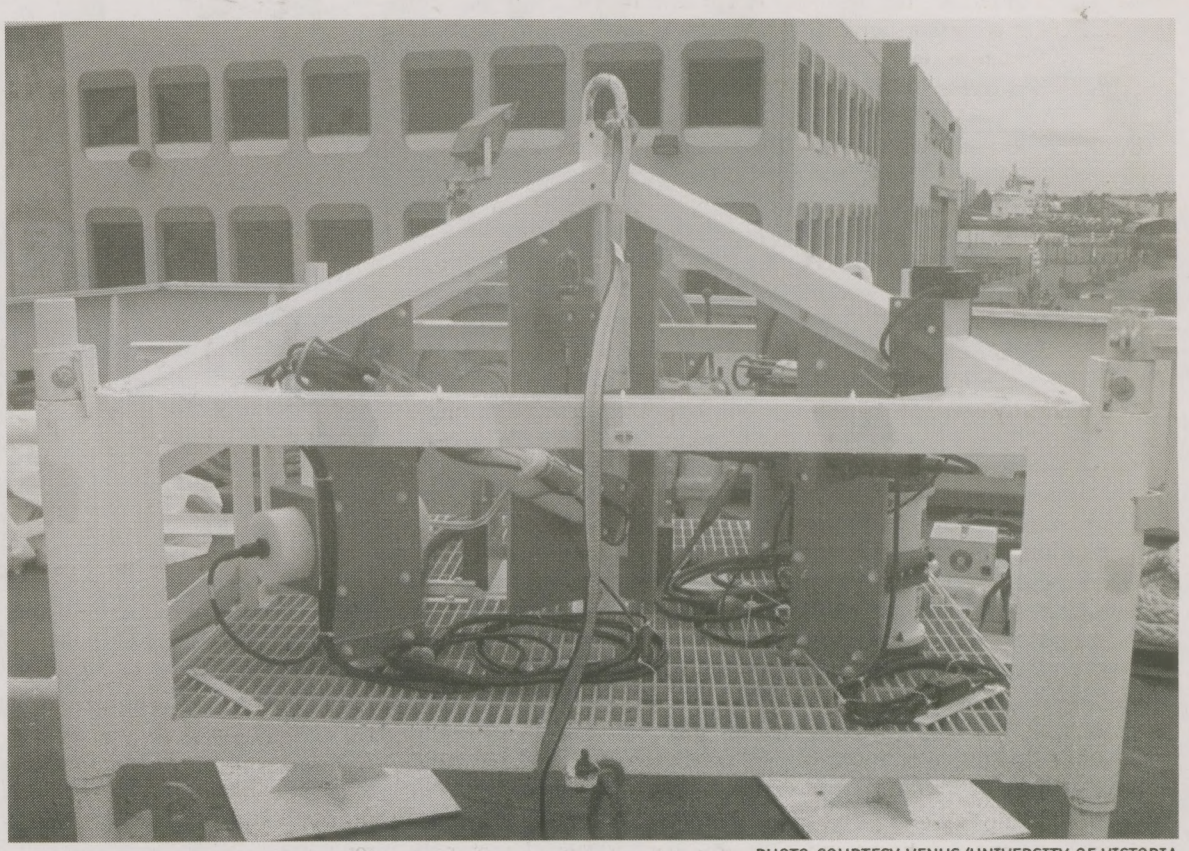


PHOTO COURTESY VENUS/UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

The VENUS instrument platform, shown before it was deployed into the Saanich Inlet.

"We are taking a different approach," said Dewey. "We are saying that the data is critical to us. We want to keep it, move it online and make it freely available."

One of the reasons that this approach is innovative is because, in the past, oceanographers went to sea to collect data only periodically.

"To truly understand climate processes one needs to collect data for decades," said Dewey.

The existing VENUS node is collecting data at a rate of four GB per day. One of the ongoing challenges is the development of tools that will have the capacity to process large volumes of raw data in order to make it available in real time over the Internet.

Another challenge will be presenting the collected information and products to both the scientific community and to the public in a way that is suitable for both.

"The key thing is that we don't want to make a big distinction between the scientific community and the public," said Dewey. "Scientists have perhaps more skill and more pointed questions because they know exactly what they are looking for. But the products being offered to the scientific community will not be that different from those being offered to the public."

In addition to the collection of data via the cable observatories, researchers at UVic will be involved in the development of technologies that could be integrated into the system.

The technology includes "software agents," programs that will work on behalf of investigators, examining incoming data for particular events and alerting them by e-mail or cell phone if one occurs.

Unmanned submarines are another technology that would extend the collection of data. A large portion of B.C.'s coast is remote and inaccessible, and it is not practical to place instrument nodes along all of it. Autonomous underwater vehicles would be able to access remote marine environments and transmit data back to the university through satellite.

VENUS engineers envision docking stations where the unmanned submarines would be able to save their data, recharge their batteries, acquire a new set of instructions and be sent off for further surveying.

"I can imagine a whole suite of [such] sensors along the coast of British Columbia," said Dewey.

The data collected would then be integrated through the DMAS portal back at UVic. This way, large areas of the ocean, even remote marine environments that we know very little about, could be observed. This research would benefit areas where there is an interest in offshore resources, such as oil and gas.

"The unmanned vehicle project is a bit of a pipe dream at the moment, but certainly the fundamentals of the technology are there now," said Dewey.

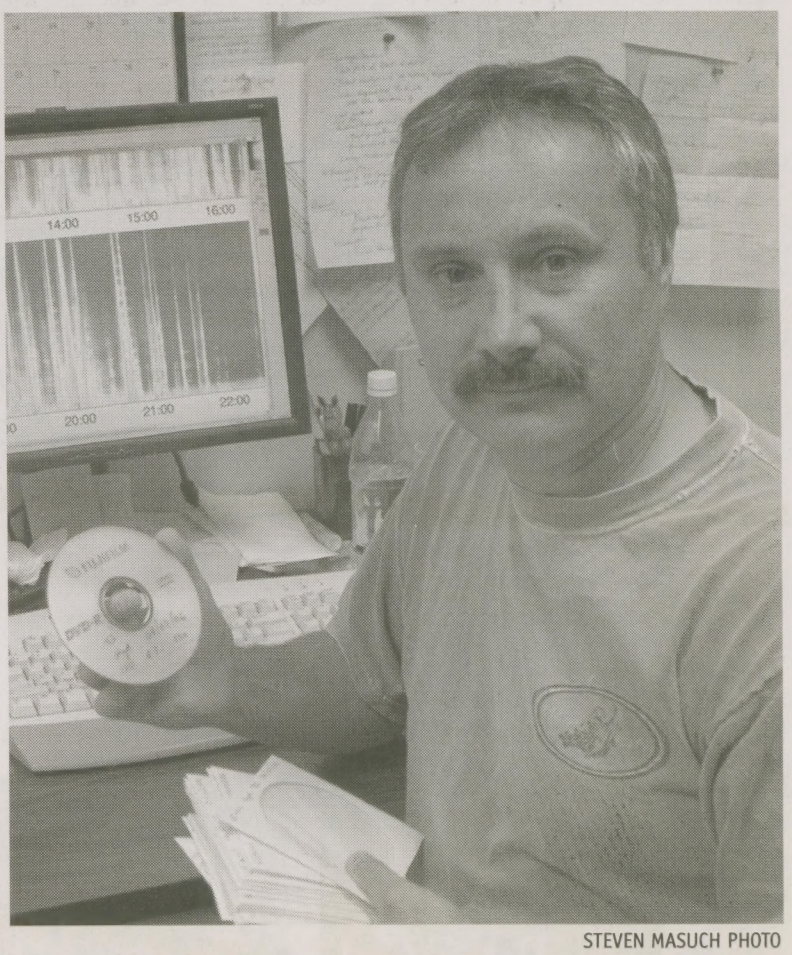
"The Japanese, the Americans and the Europeans are all in the planning stages of building cable-to-ocean observatories," said Dewey.

Fortunately, Canadian researchers were able to access grants that have allowed them to go one step further and make the project a reality.

Eighty per cent of the funding for VENUS was provided jointly by the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the British Columbia Knowledge Development Fund.

VENUS researchers view the project as much more than a data collection station. As the endeavor evolves, they see focus being placed on the processing and analysis of the collected data in order to make it as useful as possible to various types of users, allowing scientists to ask increasingly broader questions.

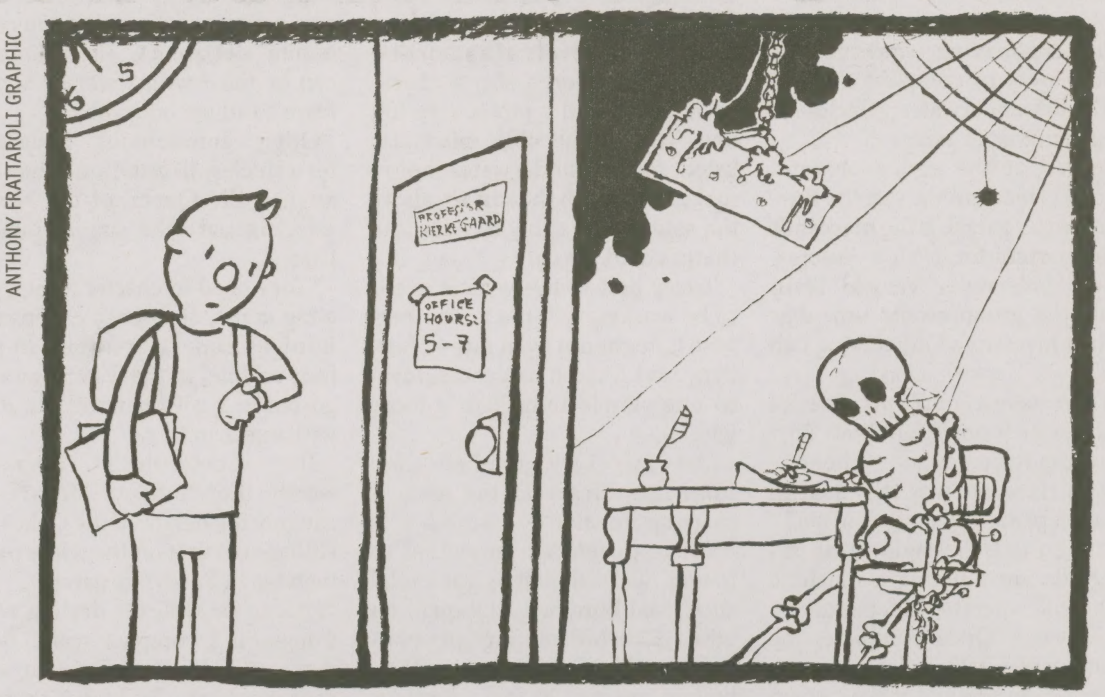
"In 20 years, I would like to see VENUS as more than cable observatories," said Dewey. "It would represent coastal marine data collection and service delivery."



STEVEN MASUCH PHOTO

Richard Dewey holds a DVD containing one day's worth of data.

Professors fight to end mandatory retirement



ANTHONY FRATTAROLI GRAPHIC

by Tim Lindsay

With baby boomers starting to retire, university professors in B.C. are calling for more flexibility in the timing and terms of their retirement.

The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA-BC) is leading a campaign to change the B.C. Human Rights Code so that it no longer permits forced retirement at age 65, regardless of ability.

Protection against age discrimination under the Human Rights Code is currently limited to people aged 19 to 64.

"Sixty-five has become a rather arbitrary limit when what [professors and other faculty] are doing is using their minds," said CUFA-BC Executive Director Robert Clift. "They don't feel that they automatically lose their minds at the age of 65."

Mandatory retirement rules also give employers the ability to change the pay of a worker when they hit 65.

"If you're paying someone a certain salary on one day, he or she turns 65 and you're paying them half the salary the next day for the same work ... it just doesn't sit right," Clift said.

University faculty associations have a particular interest in changing the Human Rights Code due to difficulties negotiating alternative retirement arrangements with individual university administrations.

"Rather than negotiating in an atmosphere where the university still wants to have tight control over who stays after age 65, when this should be the right of people to choose," said Clift, "we figured it was time to deal with this where it belongs, which is [to change] the law which makes this possible."

Clift said there are a lot of preconceived notions about retirement, pensions and what it means to be an older worker and that somebody needs to "shake up the apple cart" with new ideas.

Some unions argue that mandatory retirement creates employment opportunities for younger workers and that if people increasingly work at older ages, it gives governments and employers leverage to reduce pension payments. They claim eliminating mandatory retirement could lead to increased monitoring and evaluation of older professors.

Analysts observe that jobs subject to mandatory retirement tend to be characterized by higher wages, pensions and retirement plans, more job security, and collective agreements, while employees with lower wages and fewer benefits are not usually subject to the rule.

The large number of retiring baby boomers will open up plenty of employment opportunities for younger workers, said Clift. He thinks that it is possible to have both flexible retirement options and a strong pension system, but said the existing retirement system often doesn't meet the needs and lifestyle expectations of some.

"In fact there's a whole lot of people out there who don't have access to a pension plan," he said. "Essentially we're opening them up to exploitation because all of their rights as workers can be abridged because of their age, given the way the legislation is currently written."

UVic Faculty Association president William Pfaffenberger said mandatory retirement at 65 is particularly unfair to women.

"Many started their academic careers later in life and now face mandatory retirement without adequate pensions," he said.

Members of the union that represents sessional instructors at UVic also emphasize this point.

Susan Turner, president of the sessional component of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 4163, was involved in the contract negotiations this spring.

"Women who begin their careers in earnest after raising children are disproportionately ghettoized in sessional positions," she said.

UVic employs about 750 regular faculty members and 450 sessional instructors. When faculty members retire, they often continue to work as sessionals. In the next 10 years, 221 UVic faculty members are expected to retire.

"Arguments by many that wish to see turnover of faculty to make room for younger academics have a point," said Pfaffenberger. "But age discrimination is age discrimination, and the sooner we see it eliminated, in my mind, the better we are as a society."

Pfaffenberger thinks that with incentives and increased flexibility over their retirement schedule, most professors would still retire near 65, or even earlier.

The retirement provision was placed in the framework agreement between faculty and the university "at mutual consent" in 2000, said UVic Communications director Bruce Kilpatrick. It remained unchanged in the most recent agreement made in 2004.

"At this point there hasn't been a proposal brought up for discussion that would see that changed," said Kilpatrick.

USource change lies ahead in September

More features added for the newest version of the UVic student gateway, but is it uSeful now?

by Amy Geddes

The problem of navigating through a plethora of websites and databases to find the information UVic students need is apparently a thing of the past.

Part of Project Nova's $20-million project to turn UVic into a "unified digital campus" included launching uSource, the online information gateway available for student use since May 1. The uSource project is still underway and new features and capabilities will be implemented by September.

USource is meant to streamline the process of accessing UVic-based information by rolling everything into one place. Its tabs and channels function similarly to my "My MSN" or "My Yahoo," but with a UVic focus.

Right now any student with a Netlink ID can log on to uSource to see how it acts as a gateway that saves time filtering online information. Before uSource, the UVic homepage provided the best access to UVic-based information. While uSource doesn't replace the homepage, it allows users to access over 75 "channels" of information about the campus and community that is uniquely relevant to them. The screen can be customized to show information of interest like a personal calendar, weather, news and even comic strips.

By September, uSource will have more choices on the research tab and a single sign-on that gives users access to their multiple accounts, including financial, library and e-mail, all at once. The focus of the main tabs will be reorganized and a course studio (similar to the group studio now available) will be introduced with functions that enhance communication between teachers and students.

Students will be able to use uSource to register for their courses by March 27 of next year. In the future, uSource will be usable on handheld devices, and finely tuned campus maps could pinpoint facilities like fire extinguishers and handicapped washrooms.

USource team leader Dave Bauchman has been following what students say they like about the portal and what they don't through the feedback button and comments received from the online scavenger hunt held in May.

Bauchman has found mixed opinions.

The scavenger hunt, in which 300 students participated, was held to familiarize students with uSource. It required logging in to the portal and answering some basic questions about uSource and its functions with a section to leave comments.

Bauchman said most think uSource is a useful, powerful tool with lots of information. Favourite sections were the customizable calendar and the e-mail centre that supports multiple accounts.

Some wanted to see more "eye candy"—more graphics and fonts to break up the heavy text. Many found the amount of information on the screen overwhelming.

"We expected the initial reaction to be 'overwhelmed,'" said Bauchman, "but people quickly acclimate to it." Usability tests conducted before the launch showed that users tend to warm up to the portal within under an hour of use. A follow-up survey will gauge whether students have actually acclimatized to uSource.

With an average of only 300 users logging in daily, Bauchman and his team are waiting until more students are using uSource before making changes based on recent comments

"We don't want to have a knee-jerk response," said Bauchman, "or just follow any breeze that blows by."

Bauchman is confident that uSource will help centralize students' information.

"Right now the personal information about you is stored in 20 to 30 places around campus and each can get broken into or have something go wrong with it. "

Students shouldn't worry about hackers or identity theft. Well-known security advisors have been undergoing continual audits and Bauchman is publishing a security statement.

"Your access to information depends on who you are, what your role is and what you should have access to," Bauchman said. "Yes, with uSource you are putting all your eggs into one basket, but it's a very secure basket."

Selling Canada

by Amy Geddes

On Canada Day, when children were invited to cover the Yates Street sidewalk with chalk drawings of what Canada meant to them—a free activity—most drew Canadian flags alongside ponies, hearts, tulips, suns and the occasional tennis racket. They wrote words like "love," "fun," "freedom" and "power," but not the word "money."

A lot of cash was spent downtown on Canada Day-themed T-shirts, hats, tattoos, paper flags, food, beer and various other Canadian paraphernalia.

The Harbour Trading Co. was a hit at the corner of Government and Wharf Streets. Customers eager to don the Canadian-themed merchandise buzzed around the table the store had placed outside.

"Blow-up red and white hats, flags, tattoos, pop and water were our best-selling items," said manager Natasha Hamblin. The Harbour Trading Co. did well, as they expected they would, because of the holiday. Hamblin attributes their high Canada Day revenue to FolkFest and the four cruise ships that docked in the Inner Harbour.

For business owner Shurky Regep of Sweet Memories Ice Cream, Canada Day ended up being his busiest day of the year. A steady stream of ice cream-licking patriots came from his Government Street shop.

"Today was our busiest day of the year and Mango Tango was my best-selling flavour," said Regep, pointing out a bucket of his homemade blend of orange and raspberry swirled ice cream.

Thousands of glasses of beer and alcohol were consumed at pubs downtown, which ended with police nabbing 57 people for alcohol-related offences.

The handmade dream catchers in the Inner Harbour, however, did not sell. Aware of competition from tourist shops, vendor Margaret Simmers Sum Tyme Winter did not expect an increase in the sale of her handmade dream catchers, even though she said, "They are made with a labour of love."

The underfunded Victoria Cool Aid Society's Streetlink was busy as usual. The 400 daily meals they can afford to give out do not meet the needs of the nearly 700 homeless.

On the street outside the Douglas and View McDonald's, a homeless man, who said Streetlink had run out of food again, asked for food instead of money.

Engineers complete independent submersible

by David Karp

UVic engineering students are toiling away to complete a state-of-the-art underwater vehicle—in their classmate's garage.

Nestled at the end a peaceful Gordon Head cul-de-sac, the Burdyny family garage is the makeshift headquarters for UVic's Autonomous Underwater Vehicle Team while the group awaits new digs in the university's Engineering Lab Wing.

"There were a couple people here until 6 a.m. [once]," said Matt Burdyny, the team captain. "The only reason they left was they had to get on a plane and go to Europe."

Around 40 UVic engineering undergrads are building a machine that will operate independently underwater. Once complete, the submersible will collect images, interpret sounds and make its own decisions.

"You put it in the water," said team member Tony Kroeker. "It's basically hands-off after that."

The UVic team will drop their vehicle in a million-gallon pool when it competes on August 5 and 6 at the ninth International Autonomous Underwater Vehicle Competition in San Diego. The winners take home about $20,000 US.

Vehicles will navigate an underwater course, attempting tasks along the way. After passing through the opening gate, a flashing light will signal the vehicle to drop weights in one of four underwater bins. There's also a checkpoint to hit and a pipeline to follow. The submersible must also listen for an underwater noise-maker and reach the surface above the sound. But a tiny mistake and things could get ugly.

"Every part of the vehicle needs to be working 100 per cent otherwise it might not even move," Burdyny said. "And it can come down to one simple thing like a loose wire."

Last year UVic finished third from last. This year the team is more optimistic.

"Some people are expecting us to win. We've definitely got a solid shot," said Burdyny. The squad secured a record number of sponsorships this year, increasing their budget nearly 20-fold. Burdyny wouldn't give exact numbers, but said it's in the six figures.

Corporate backing means the UVic team has access to the best parts, both local and foreign.

"Our cameras are from Inuktun in Nanaimo," Burdyny said, adding that the motors and connectors are from Switzerland. Even Thrifty Foods has gotten on board by providing the team with jumbo sacks of potato chips.

The vehicle, roughly the size of a briefcase, is an empty plastic tub with blue motors on the sides and a transparent tube at the top containing electronics. The main hull can be filled with water or Styrofoam to adjust buoyancy.

Other autonomous underwater vehicles, like the one that examined the Queen of the North wreckage, are the size of pickup trucks.

"They need to charter a ship, get a big crane, and that's expensive," Burdyny said. "If you want to put [our vehicle] in the water, you can go out in a rowboat and put it in with one arm."

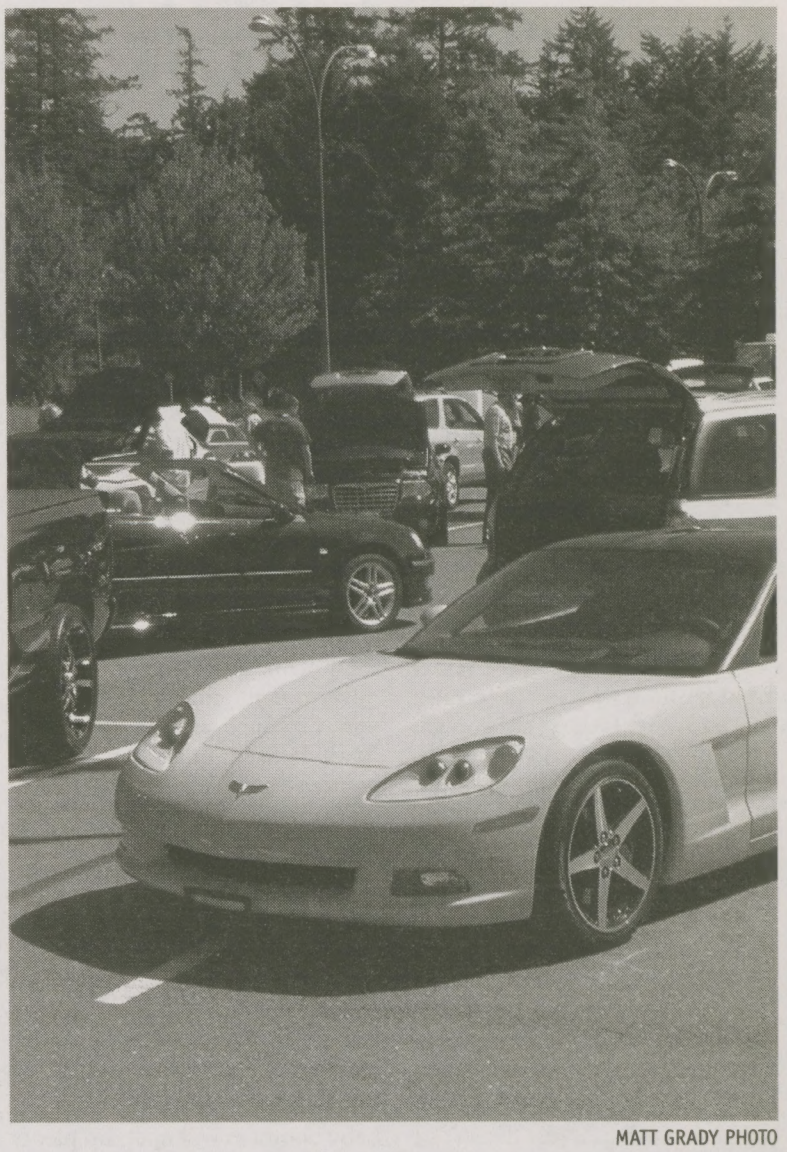
The submersible's computer, worth thousands of dollars, is roughly the height of the Coke can sitting next to it on the white plastic table in Burdyny's garage.

"It can be difficult dealing with things on a compact scale," Burdyny said. "Sometimes that can cause problems, and other times it works out well."

Win or lose, the UVic team plans to keep using their vehicle after the competition.

"We've had a construction company approach us," Burdyny said. "They've got footings underwater, and they want us to go down and take a look at them." The team has numerous options.

"With the parts we have in this thing," said Kroeker, "what it's able to do is far beyond what we'll get it to do at the competition."



MATT GRADY PHOTO

A 2007 Corvette Z06 at the Victoria International Auto Show.

Host an auto show for $5

by Matt Grady

Three students turned a $5 start-up capital into the first Victoria International Auto Show.

Over 100 new cars filled the UVic Fine Arts parking lot, gleaming in the 30-degree sun, inviting a steady stream of locals on June 25.

The auto show, the first in Victoria in over a decade, ran from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Porsches and Pontiacs, Hondas and Hyundais, Minis and Mitsubishis reflected off the sunglasses of onlookers. The Rotary Club of Victoria raffled off a Smart Car and Jack FM provided tunes.

"Planning an event like that properly takes three to four months," says Dave Adamowicz who, with fellow business students Paul Taylor and Brette Carrigan, organized the show in only six weeks for their summer entrepreneurship course. Taylor's father suggested an auto show for the course project, which was assigned the first day.

"It only took a five-minute discussion to realize that's what we wanted to do," said Adamowicz.

The first two weeks of the project involved selling the auto show idea to Victoria dealerships and the mapping of expenses. Taylor and Adamowicz met with sales managers and presented a dealership participation proposal, which outlined who they were, their motivation for organizing an auto show and how they would market the event.

The proposal, a "work in progress," was constantly updated and refined as more dealerships got on board—16 in all, including one in Nanaimo.

It took "three to four more days than we thought it would for them to decide," said Adamowicz. "We had to really persist."

In addition to a class presentation, detailing the experience of selling the project to the dealerships, Taylor, Adamowicz and Carrigan turned in a 10-page report to professor Ana Maria Peredo, which was very well received.

The remainder of the project involved bookings, confirmations and set-up for the auto show. A website was set up, plus 5,000 brochures and 60 posters were distributed.

Sponsors for the event included the Times Colonist, Driving.ca and A-Channel News.

The Fine Arts parking lot was secured for the weekend, with dealers parking their cars and prepping for the event on Saturday evening. The group was not permitted to outsource security, so Taylor and Adamowicz dedicated their night to watching over the cars, with campus security making hourly rounds.

A fantastic turnout, remarked David Glabais, sales manager of Honda City, who "jumped on full force" for the project.

"We got a lot of the people in town that don't get to see our vehicles," said Mike Delmaire of Saunders Subaru of Colwood.

Positive feedback from attendees reaffirmed the hard work and dedication put into such an ambitious project.

"People were super friendly," says Adamowicz.

Looking ahead, Taylor and Adamowicz have applied for a business licence under the name Dynamic Planning and are organizing another auto show for next year.

"We made so many connections with sales managers," notes Adamowicz. "Prior to this, I never had to sell anything."

Cultural character through urban planning

by Kim Armstrong

PHOTO COURTESY OF COWICHAN CENTRE

It's effort more than taste that counts, and Duncan's giant hockey stick is as valid an example as Paris' Notre Dame.

Summer vacation has always been a favourite time to travel, and so far this year I've done my fair share. From New York City to Montreal to Toronto and its many suburbs, I've had the chance to see a lot of cities, and I've had a chance to do a lot of reflecting on what it is that gives a city a sense of identity, community and personality.

It was a town called Oakville, one of Toronto's satellite communities, which really started me thinking about a city's character. Founded in 1827 to serve as a port of trade between fellow satellite Hamilton, Toronto and the rest of the world, Oakville is and always has been an industrial town.

Driving through Oakville at 11 p.m., in an attempt to find an open restaurant in the vicinity of nearby Burlington, the town seemed dead. Apparently entirely made up of subdivisions, Oakville's rows of cookie-cutter houses ranged from fully finished to wood-and-pasteboard skeletons of identical houses yet to be. There were no sidewalks. Oakville seemed to lack every feature that, put together, turns a town from a cluster of dwellings to a community.

The fact that a town is an industrial community is not in itself a barrier to creating community identity. Victoria started out as a fur-trading fort (and incidentally was originally named Fort Albert). The problems tend to come when a town's industry is based primarily on serving the needs of other cities. If a portion of the product is locally sold as well as locally manufactured, a town remains at least partially self-sufficient. A town with an industry in which the entire focus is on meeting the needs of other places thinks only of the needs of those places and has no time, energy or inclination to turn the focus inward and develop as an independent community.

Worse are the towns that exist for the sole purpose of giving workers from the nearby metropolis a place to rest their heads at night. Neighbours are then drawn together not by shared values or common interests, but by convenience. People sleep in the town, but spend most of their time in the city, and their interest and energy is invested in the place where they work.

One of the basic requirements for a community is interaction between its residents and, oddly, one of the better indicators for the level of community feeling within a neighborhood are the sidewalks. A community with sidewalks is a step in the right direction. Of course, a community with sidewalks in regular use is even better, but either way, one has to give credit for the effort. Communities that include public walkways in their planning want people to travel within their borders.

It sounds simple, but if there are sidewalks, there are places to walk to on them. You can walk to the store, to the park or to Sue's house on Grant Street. Foot travel encourages interaction, and it also encourages attractions and amenities close to home. The bleakest, least personable communities are the ones without sidewalks, because the purpose of these communities is to get in the car and go somewhere else.

City structures are also a gauge of local levels of community feeling. It's the effort rather than the tastefulness of the decoration that counts, and Duncan, B.C.'s giant hockey stick is as valid an example as Paris' Notre Dame cathedral. Pride in monuments and architecture shows in the small details, the attempts to make each structure in some small way different from the rest.

One does not take the time and effort to deviate from the mold unless one is building for reasons other than pure functionality. Aesthetic details give people something to be proud of, uniting them with a sense of civic pride.

Building maintenance is another clue. If people care about their community and their surroundings, they will spend the energy, time and money to keep their community in the best shape they can. Dilapidated buildings and urban decay are sure signs of indifference.

And what about our own fair city, Victoria? Once one has been here for a while, sheer familiarity with the local landscape tends to drive conscious thought on the issue to the farther reaches of the brain, especially if, like me, one's been here for a lifetime.

One thing I regret about the city is our persistent uniculturalism. This is not to say that we're intolerant—with the Inter-Cultural Association's FolkFest in its 33rd year and attendance at the festival persistently topping 150,000, Victoria is a friendly and culture-curious city.

With our smaller size, however, we have never built up large enough numbers of various cultural groups to form the diverse neighbourhoods and cultural communities that give larger cities a sense of world community.

There are good things to be said, however, about a town in which the only thing we have to worry about from the homeless gentleman on the street corner is an unexpected squeegee and in which the most feared drivers on the road are octogenarians or older. From this year's crop of decorative bears to the provincial legislature buildings; from the Empress Hotel and the Royal B.C. Museum, to Barb's Fish and Chips at Fisherman's Wharf; Victoria has at least a touch of charm.

The Sierra Club offers food for thought—and for the stomach

by Dan Ben-Aron

Attracted by the promise of an evening of free educational presentations and samples of environmentally friendly ice cream, over 140 people packed into St. John's Church Hall on June 28. Organic food, slow food and all foods local and delicious were present, but the event was also meant to draw attention to harmful uses of our environment.

The night, which was organized by the Victoria Sierra Club Victoria Group and sponsored by local businesses, was entitled, "Food for Thought: Eating Well for the Body, Mind and Community," and did not disappoint the assembled foodies.

Emceed by the Sierra Club's Trisha Twiss, the evening featured a number of presenters from local businesses and the NGO community.

Speaker Ray Zimmerman, of the Sea to Sea Greenbelt Society, spoke of an unsustainable global food industry. He noted concerns over increasing inaccessibility to freshwater and questioned the assumption that "we will always get our food from elsewhere." Criticizing the centralization of global food production and distribution, Zimmerman argued for spending the required funds to protect B.C.'s remaining watersheds.

David Mincey, the executive chef at Camille's and a founding member of the Island Chef's Collaboration, followed Zimmerman. Evidently accustomed to speaking to crowds, Mincey gave an impassioned presentation. He outlined the work of the Collaboration and explained how projects like it were working to implement the vision of local production and distribution that Zimmerman presented. He explained how a group of nearly two-dozen local restaurants have banded together to provide logistical and economic support to local farmers, who now supply 90 per cent of his restaurant's food needs.

After a brief break, during which attendees were treated to samples from local businesses including Sooke Harbour House, Wildfire Bakery and Shady Creek Ice Cream, Mara Jernigan from Fairburn Farm took the stage to conclude the evening. Lamenting the decline of the Vancouver Island's food production capacity, she outlined the gradual improvements in local output.

The most strident of the evening's presenters, Jernigan claimed that, "we have to be militant" about creating a local menu. Jernigan argued that food is a part of every society's cultural heritage and invited the crowd to consider Canada's current idolatry of the Tim Hortons doughnut. Noting that a U.S. company now largely owns Tims, she condemned this Canadian culinary icon as a mixture of sugar, genetically modified canola oil and flour that bears little connection to our needs and production capabilities.

Jernigan outlined a number of potential strategies for Victorians to support local production. The most popular of these methods seemed to be the Community Supported Agriculture scheme through which people can buy subscriptions to locally produced food that is delivered directly to their door.

The Sierra Club is a grassroots organization, with chapters across Canada and the U.S., formed in 1892 dedicated to promoting a responsible use of our natural environment.

VIVA Choirs
Artistic Director Connie Foss More

New! 'Summer Songs' Day Camp

2 locations! August 14 -18, for ages 8 - 12
at UVic, or at Juan de Fuca Rec Centre
Half or full days with sports/activities

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Into the outfield

Players on the fringes of baseball

by Jessica Smith

Graphics by Anthony Frattaroli

Staring down the pitcher, I bang my bat on the ground and dig my toes into the dirt. This is going to be the hit mighty Casey wanted when he was at the bat.

A crowd whoops, but the pitcher hasn't wound up yet and I haven't swung. We watch in awe as a stray ball sails over the left field fence and into our game. There's an organized league game on the diamond in Beacon Hill Park, but we're playing a casual game of pick-up on the grass beyond the outfield.

"We are literally way out in left-field here," the catcher says and I laugh while we watch the batter round second.

Looking at the skilled teams on the diamond, with their uniform tight pants and a glove for every player, I'm a little jealous and have a sense of being a loser outsider looking in on the real game.

Baseball as a metaphor for life isn't new—anyone who's felt the thrill of getting to second base (i.e. done some heavy petting) is aware of the long history of cliché. For the moment I ignore how trite my thoughts are and take pride in being an outsider and identify myself with the long lineup of them in baseball's history—the only difference between me and them is they could play ball.

The pitch of grass my friends and I are playing on is C-shaped, curving around the real outfield. Its shape; our sense of self-deprecation and absence of talent, equipment and enough players to cover all bases; gives us our name, the C-team.

We are playing ball, but not in the American pastime sense. Since too few kids showed up to cover all four bases we're playing a game that resembles Lapta, a Russian form of the game.

There are only two bases and few rules: you can run when you want and hit where you want (foul balls in any direction are called fair). You can't strike out in Lapta, or ever have too many players on the same base at the same time. A lack of skill improves the game. Errors such as players dropping the ball or tripping over their own feet give the runners more time to score. It's a little more violent—fielders can prevent runners from getting on base by tackling or tripping them, and can get them out by hitting them with the ball anywhere below shoulders. It's a tactic that was legal in American baseball until 1845, when New York's Knickerbocker club codified the rules and decided it was too dangerous. Our mini T-ball bat and the few gloves we have make us too sophisticated for Lapta, which was originally played with a club or stick and bare hands.

When the pitcher finally throws, I hit a short foul. Two fielders run for it, and into each other, ending up on the ground. The pitcher, Ryan, finally gets a hold of the ball, and throws it to Taylor on base. She isn't paying attention, so

it sails past her into the outfield, and I'm safe. Andrew, our catcher, gives up in disgust and decides to climb a tree.

"Twenty points for whoever hits Andrew," I yell, kidding, because none of us can hit that far. The line of trees by the road is our Green Monster (Fenway's legendary left-field wall), and knocking Andrew off his tree would be an out-of-the-park home run.

The game we're playing is a relic from when baseball was a school kids' bat-and-ball game. It was called Lapta in Russia and Rounders in England.

Russian influence on America's national sport was revived in the '30s and '40s when communist newspapers founded by Russian immigrants used baseball news to integrate their immigrant readership with American culture, and also hook the American reader while introducing them to their ideals. The papers published statistics from the Negro League alongside the American and National League news, and lauded the skills of black players such as Jackie Robinson and Satchel Paige. Today those papers take credit for helping end institutionalized racism in the major leagues.

Still, black ball players were outsiders in baseball long after Robinson broke the colour barrier. When Satchel Paige was let into the majors after he'd been playing for more than 25 years, he said, "The only change is that baseball has turned Paige from a second class citizen to a second class immortal."

Standing on base, trying to find commonality between immortals like Robinson and Paige and myself, I don't get anywhere. They had talent and drive—we're here on the fringes beyond the outfield because most of us lack both. I might dream of playing under the bright lights of a stadium, but most of the C-team came to hang out, do cartwheels between plays and lie around in the sun.

Justin's up to bat now and there are three runners on base. He's a better thinker than slugger, so he grabs the attention of the pitcher by yelling, "Hey, come get me," and bolts. He sprints out of the field and into traffic, giving all three runners time to score. As the two boys chase each other down the road the rest of us have time relax and catch our breath.

I want to hit a home run though. To smack it out of the park, break a window, tear the leather off the ball. I want to do what Joe Carter did.

Carter was Toronto's darling, the ultimate insider and star in the '90s. I was nine when he hit the home run that ushered in three runs at the bottom of the ninth, winning the '93 World Series for the Jays the second year in a row. He was my hero that fall and during the major league players' strike that spanned my most awkward preteen years. The sense of right and wrong imparted to me by my father was entirely based on what Carter would and would not do. Fighting or complaining? Joe wouldn't do that. Nor would he stuff leathery roast beef in his pocket to feed to the cat later, forget about it, and get caught when it came out in the wash. Carter didn't just perform the miracle of being the first player in history to end a World Series on a home run, he was also an honourable man and a good Christian. He protested the firing of his manager Cito Gaston by wearing Gaston's number on his Jays shirt, and always thanked Christ for his success. Today, Carter is an inspirational Christian speaker. I had stopped going to church by the time the players' strike ended, but I still hear an echoing voice of my father, "Do you think Joe would do that?" every time I see his MVP banner hanging in Toronto's Rogers Centre.

When I step up to the plate again I'm channelling Carter, praying for the big hit that will bring me into the game. Waiting for the friendly banter to wind down and the pitcher to wind up, it occurs to me that baseball is more than the legends of the players, games and fields—some see romance in the game itself. It's the only major league game that doesn't run against the clock. The play inches forward at the pace of the pitcher's whim—you might say it's timeless. The shape of the field starts at home plate and stretches out as far as you can hit a ball, a metaphor for possibility and some American dream.

I dream of a big hit that knocks Andrew out of the tree for 20 points and bounces over fence into the outfield of the real game.

Editorial

Mandatory retirement is a must

Ontario has done away with it, so has Quebec and Alberta—now it's B.C.'s turn. It's time to get rid of mandatory retirement.

The Confederation of the University Faculty Associations of B.C. (CUFA-BC) is spearheading the movement to end what they say is a discriminatory practise, which allows employers to let go of a worker once they've reached 65.

The group believes there is no reason to dismiss a perfectly functioning 65-year-old from their job. People don't automatically cease to be knowledgeable or useful when they hit a certain age—and many may not be ready to stop earning money.

Residents of the province are now expected to live until they're about 80. When the legislation was created, however, this age was much lower. Recent improvements in health care mean that people are mentally fit until a much older age.

So maybe people shouldn't be forced to stop work at 65, but abolishing mandatory retirement creates another set of problems for a different generation.

Victoria has long been known as a home to the newlyweds and nearly deads, and as such, would be particularly affected by this change in legislation—not necessarily in a positive way.

There's not a lot of high-paying job availability in Victoria. The service sector makes up the largest pool of employment in the city, but these jobs rarely provide a large enough income or stability for the long-term. The top three kinds of occupations in the capitol region are clerical work, sales and service, and retail clerks. Jobs within the professional and public sector are fewer and hard to secure.

Once someone finds a good job here, they don't let it go—and they live for a long, long time.

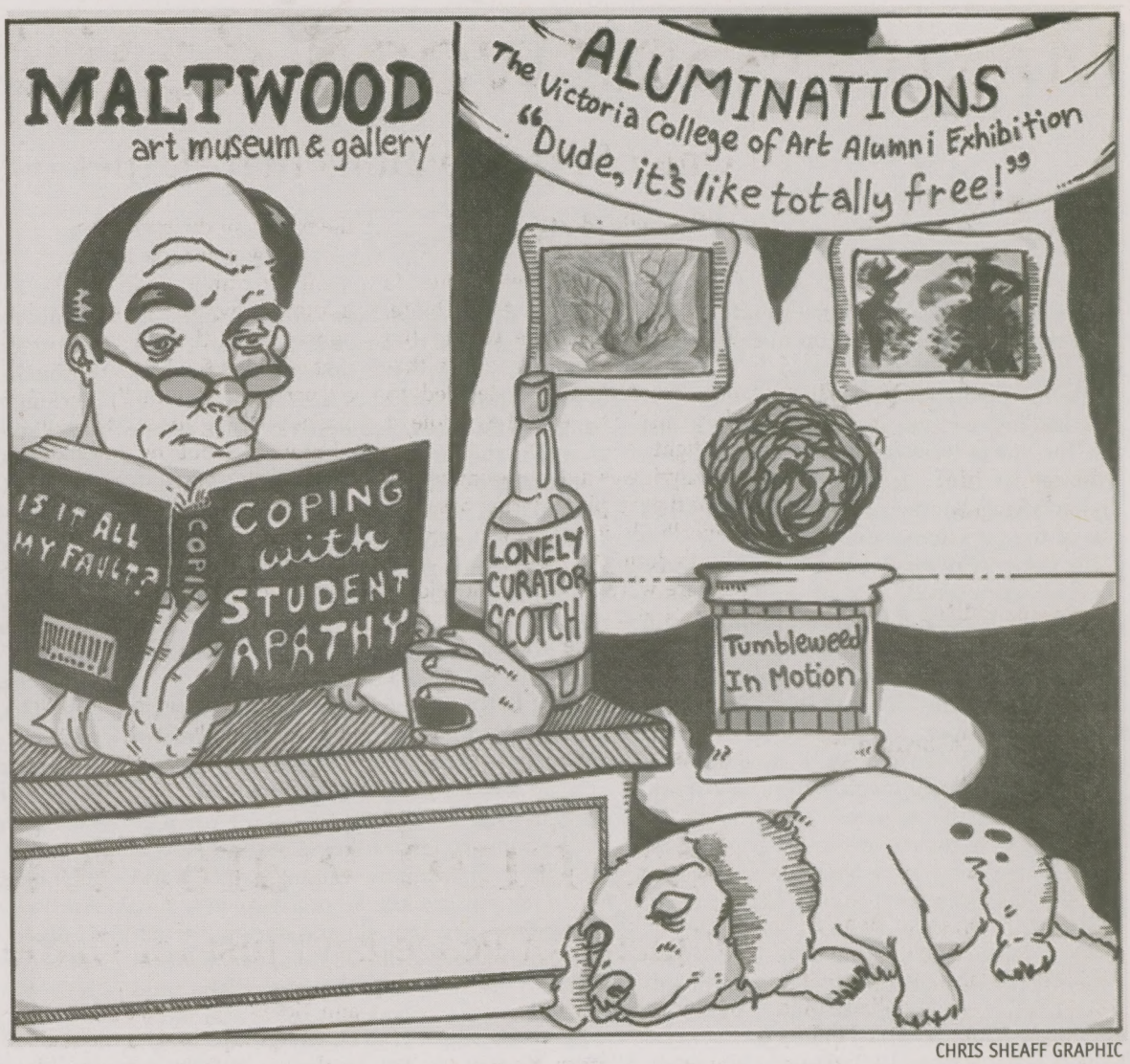
This causes trouble for the large population of young men and women, who have fallen in love with Victoria, often after attending one of our post-secondary institutions, and are looking to raise families.

In many cases if they want to establish themselves and their careers it will mean leaving Victoria, most likely for one of the country's urban centres. The city and many other lesser-populated areas of the province are losing out in a significant way.

It's not a new assertion that young minds are complete with fresh ideas and new ways of thinking. It would be a shame to lose a hunk them to large cities such as Vancouver and Toronto, where there's more room for opportunity and advancement in the workplace. But they aren't going to stick around here to work at the Empress or a whale-watching kiosk for the rest for their lives.

Even if mandatory retirement is abolished, the number of baby boomers dying off will quickly climb. At this time, Victoria is going to need a hearty supply of youngsters to fill the positions. But after educated youth migrate to big cities, it will be hard to bring them back.

Mandatory retirement isn't about discrimination or the assumption that people are not relevant past a certain age, it's a necessary tool for a society in which good jobs are hard to come by.



CHRIS SHEAFF GRAPHIC

Rating doomsday scenarios

It's the end of the world as we know it and I feel … fine?

by Norman Ed Baskerville

Recent doomsday speculation by scientists and the media has me pondering what would be the best route to ride out Earth's untimely demise. The following are my top five picks for the most desirable ways for us to join the void of non-existence.

Number One: Nuclear war
Renewed concerns of nuclear annihilation have been sparked by North Korea's recent missile test launches. Hypocritical reactions by other holders of the ultimate thunderstick have increased the Vegas odds of doomsday à la missile.

The world's combined arsenal, an estimated 20,000 short, medium and long-range nuclear warheads, could assuredly blow up the planet many times over. On the positive side, all-out nuclear war would be relatively quick and painless. Sure many Earthlings would suffer from acute stress while huddled around the family television set, scarfing down cheezies while watching CNN's extensive mushroom cloud coverage, but alcohol, marijuana and Prozack for the kids should make waiting for the inevitable more palatable.

Note: Nuclear war only tops the list if a mass missile launch occurs and there are no survivors, otherwise, due to the discomfort and irritation of radiation burns and the resulting general chaotic milieu of a dying civilization, it ranks at number three.

Number Two: Global warming
Fortunately Al Gore has reminded us of the consequences of our unquenchable consumption of fossil fuels. Global warming, according to reputable scientists, could cause epic destruction involving extreme weather, floods, droughts, epidemics and killer heat waves beyond anything we have ever experienced.

The upside? Well, firstly we'd all be witness to the destructive beauty of Mother Nature, either first-hand or via the Weather Channel. Secondly, global warming would take a while to wipe all of us out, giving us time to go for a relaxing drive in the old SUV while listening to Radiohead sing, "You do it to yourself, you do/And that's what really hurts."

Number Three: Worldwide Viral Pandemic
According to the World Health Organization (WHO), SARS, HIV, avian-flu, Ebola virus and others on the mutated horizon could make us a planet of intolerable, incurable sickies. Not a nice way for humanity to peter-out.

Living in a world where fear of contact with others could create a new fashion industry for chic, contaminate-resistant suits, complete with stylish particle filter masks. But the social paranoia would make dates and sexual encounters hard to come by.

Number Four: Diminished Water and Food Supply
It's not just overpopulation that threatens the world's water and food supply. According to WHO, technologies that developed countries use to make modern life comfy and non-labour intensive have already poisoned much of the world's water, which in turn poisons our agriculture. With heavily populated countries such as China and India becoming ever more industrial, sustainability experts expect water and food resources to dwindle fast.

Now, I'm sure some readers are surprised that this scenario is so low on the list. Remember, Canada has more safe drinking water than any other country on Earth, but hungry and thirsty people are usually grumpy and not fun to be around. And if humans are willing to war over energy resources, imagine what we would do to acquire food and water resources (please refer to option number one).

Number Five: The Biblical Apocalypse
The end of the world as carried out by God.

As a card-carrying Atheist, this doomsday possibility doesn't hold much water in my opinion. But if I'm wrong, an invisible entity in the sky has pre-planned everything in the universe, including the destruction of Earth. This would be the worst possible doomsday scenario, because if the greatest conceivable being is a destructive bastard, I don't relish spending eternity with him or her.

But there is hope for humanity. Last month, respected astrophysicist Stephen Hawking announced a 100-year plan for human continuity: colonize space.

"It is important for the human race to spread out into space for the survival of the species. Life on Earth is at the ever-increasing risk of being wiped out," he said.

It's not clear why Hawking wants humanity to survive. He points out intelligent life in the universe includes the human race, "even though much of its behaviour throughout history has been pretty stupid, and not calculated to aid the survival of the species."

And for those readers who think doomsday isn't inevitable, I congratulate you on your optimism and challenge you to do something to prove me wrong. In the meantime I'll keep my money riding on nuclear war and hope I don't hit the jackpot.

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Softwood deal hard to swallow

One of many actions that Harper has designed to win Bush's affection

by Michelle Martin

The softwood lumber dispute is over, but it's no time to celebrate. The only reason the war of the woods came to a close was that our country's leader decided to throw in the towel in the middle of the fight.

Sadly, it was just one of many actions that Stephen Harper has strategically designed to win George Bush's doting affection.

There were no cheers of rejoice on this side of the border when the heated battle came to an end (though rumours did surface of the sort of muffled lip-smacking that would accompany political ass-kissing when Harper visited the president this month).

It's no wonder the B.C. government and lumber industry groups in three provinces are gravely disappointed in the seven-year deal that requires the U.S. to pay back 80 per cent of illegally collected duties totalling about $4 billion.

But what about the other 20 per cent? If the duties were illegally collected, as ruled by NAFTA panels, then shouldn't 100 per cent be returned? After all, $1 billion is a considerable sum, even for one of Canada's largest industries with exports totaling $8.5 billion last year.

Federal NDP leader Jack Layton appropriately likened the agreement to a civil court case gone awry when he visited Victoria earlier this month.

It's like a judge ruling someone has to pay back a bunch of money, but as soon as that person leaves the courthouse they turn around and start negotiating how much they'll actually give back, he said.

Almost as distasteful as the arbitrary payback sum is the agreement's "export tax" stipulation—taxes added when the price of lumber drops—this adds salt to an already festering wound.

By signing the agreement this month, Harper has not only punished the softwood lumber industry, but also jeopardized the future of free trade in numerous export-driven industries by setting a dangerous precedent for undermining NAFTA.

Layton's ears are perked at the potential for future loses, but Harper seems to be paying the subject little heed.

Harper acted like a young boy with a crush. However, the cost of Bush's courtship far exceeded that of a heart-shaped locket or bundle of carnations.

And the big bucks the agreement cost Canadian softwood exporters is a meager sum compared to the damage it caused to the fair trade agreement so many industries rely on.

In the end, all we're left with is a façade of fair trade, and even that façade is fading.

We fund wars, why not peace?

Ministry of Peace isn't just for Orwell anymore

by Rosie Westwood

Canada's military flounders—it's hugely under-funded and incapable of achieving the missions we ask of it. In an effort to rejuvenate the military after decades of cutbacks, the Conservative government recently announced $17.1 billion in new military spending for aircraft, helicopters, supply ships and military trucks.

While Canadian troops fight in Afghanistan, while the war on terror reigns in Iraq and while numerous conflicts rage across the globe, a small but determined group of people gathered in Victoria united under a single belief: military force is not enough.

No amount of foreign aid, work by the United Nations or single-handed guidance by the United States has been able to effectively deal with global violence.

We've become so desensitized to the idea of "fighting for peace" that the irony in that phrase is lost. In today's world, where less and less "traditional" wars are fought and violence spreads among fractioned groups with a myriad of goals, our military is less and less effective. "Fighting" for peace does not work.

June 19 to 22 marked the second People's Summit for Ministries and Departments of Peace. Sixty delegates from 18 countries gathered at Royal Roads University to discuss the promotion of government structures in countries worldwide whose purpose would be "to work hand-in-hand with civil society—reflecting, building and sustaining a culture of peace," according to the summit communiqué.

The United States has yet to bring peace to Iraq. Our Canadian forces are criticized alongside the Taliban by Afghans and have yet to secure peace there. These results are decidedly sub-par.

Some argue there's no solution to conflict because violence is a problem that cannot be solved. It is inherent in human nature and people's perspectives are too disparate for peace to exist.

But that is a theory, not proven fact. Until we can say every possible avenue for peace has been exhausted, accepting violence in the world is a choice, not a truth.

We should dedicate ourselves to preventative solutions and crisis management for conflict like we do with the economy and the environment. We should establish a Ministry of Peace, not just in the government of Canada, but also in governments across the world.

The People's Summit has grown both in scope and size this year. Canada and the U.S. were both represented, as was the U.K. Other countries included India, Italy, Japan, Liberia, Nepal, the Netherlands and Palestine.

While both summits have been held in Western countries (last year's was held in London), it is developing nations who have made the largest strides to build government structures for the cultivation of peace.

The United State's Peace Alliance is fighting for a peace department with an American flair, including celebrity endorsements from Flea of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Joaquin Phoenix and former CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite. Current legislation before the Congress would see two per cent of the $400 billion military budget used to create a Department of Peace—a measly amount with potential for enormous change.

With Harper's increased military spending, it now seems like the opportune time to create a Ministry of Peace in Canada. The government is willing to support spending so our troops are properly equipped for missions they are sent on. What would be even better is certainty that the task is necessary.

Before sending Canadians overseas to liberate or protect using tools of war, we should be positive the deaths that follow are unavoidable.

This certainty might be possible if the government dedicates itself to avoiding war with a Ministry of Peace to balance the Department of National Defence.

French foreign language program needs overhaul

by Vanessa Lundgren

If there's somebody to thank for the experiences I collected as an English teacher in France, it would be Jack Lang. In 2001 as the French Minister of Education, Lang gave a landmark speech about the importance of learning a foreign language at the primary school level.

He stressed the need for foreign language assistants in the classroom to motivate students. Lang said it was essential "to arm their children for the future," a future geared towards a more unified and multilingual Europe.

Lang's proposal to have languages taught early in a child's education is a good start, but the curriculum lacks scope and effectiveness.

I happened to be one of 262 Canadians placed in schools all over France this past school year. You'd think that by pumping so much money into this initiative, France was becoming a leader in European multilingualism. Think again. The program has problems. A lack of overall consistency leads to fundamental differences such as whether some assistants receive training or not prior to stepping into the classroom.

Lang's change to the curriculum was a sign of the times. The franc was being phased out in favour of the euro. The European community was becoming increasingly unified.

France needed to step up to the plate and become more multilingual if it wanted to be a leader within the international scene. Learning another language was no longer seen as a threat, said Lang, but a means of preservation and advancement.

It was an innovative plan. In the 2004-2005 school year alone, 6,200 positions were offered to foreign language assistants all over the country, compared to a mere 1,000 in the 1999-2000 school year. German, English, Arabic, Spanish and Italian are some of the 13 languages the program reports are being actively taught in French public schools.

Here's where one sees the weaknesses in the program. Since students only see the assistant twice a week, 45 minutes at a time, there is little devotion to learning the language.

I was advised by the school district to follow their techniques, with emphasis on developing an ear for the language through songs and games.

It worked relatively well in the classroom but the children were ill equipped when it came to reading and writing.

The early introduction of languages in the classroom serves the government well in its claim that it's taking the right steps to promote a stronger country. It's an opportunity to appease the population. The hypocrisy shows, however, when you look at the program up close.

In that sense, it's not too different from French programs in Canada. In B.C., students are required to take a second language from grades five through eight. French isn't the only option, but about 90 per cent of schools only offer French. In Ontario, students must take French until ninth grade. Graduates don't generally come out bilingual but, in the game of Quebec-friendly politics, it looks good to have such educational programs in place.

In order for the French to produce a multilingual generation, the government needs to review the program, increase hours of instruction, reform teachers, and smooth out discrepancies in training methods. It is a benefit, after all, to have foreigners in the country, teaching their children. They should make the most of it. They've got the right idea: it is valuable to learn a second language. But the government needs to follow through with changes to make it useful.

AMY GEDDES PHOTO

Aeriosa performers dance on a Centennial Square wall during this year's FolkFest.

Rock climbing meets modern dance

by Amy Geddes

Imagine modern dancers expressing their art while suspended in the air by climbing ropes. On July 2 the Aeriosa Dance Society soared through the air against a yellow-brick backdrop, holding audience faces upwards. At this year's FolkFest the wall of Centennial Square's four-storey parkade was Aeriosa's stage.

After their performance, I followed the dance troupe "backstage"—a roped-off area on the parkade's top floor. At first glance they looked like a regular group of rock climbers, not FolkFest performers. Two vehicles backed up to the roof ledge served as dressing and equipment rooms, complete with harnesses, carabineers and coils of nylon kernmantle rope.

"We're just heading out for breakfast," said dancer Scott Buffett. For the group, eating takes priority over spur-of-the-moment interview requests. But before they drove off to Re-bar, I managed to set up a telephone interview with Aeriosa's creative director Julia Taffe, while she peeled off her lycra rock climbing/dancing gear.

There is a small, but growing, international community of vertical dance artists spread throughout the world. Companies in the U.S., France, Australia and Argentina share similarities with Aeriosa. But as the first group in the province to combine rock climbing with modern dance, Taffe and her team hush audiences with performances that invoke the energy of the British Columbian mountains, where they often rehearse.

"The mountains have always been the starting place for the creativity of my work," said Taffe, who choreographed the FolkFest performance with moves she called "peregrine," "stag leap," "gecko," and "upside down spinning bug."

"Aeriosa does have an urban home, but its heart is in the mountains."

While Taffe's dance company is based in Vancouver, they have been spotted dancing on vertical spaces such as the Vancouver Public Library, the Cirque du Soleil complex in Montreal, Wheeler Opera House in Aspen and the Taipei City Hall.

Aeriosa's style of dance strives to honour the sprit of the natural world. This requires sensitivity to the surfaces they perform on. Unlike the flat and solid surfaces that most dancers use, Aeriosa's vertical stages—whether they are urban ledges, opera houses, libraries or shear rock faces—are always structurally unique.

"Our kind of dancing makes us subject to the elements," said Taffe, "so we have to be flexible in our approach to creation."

The Centennial Square parkade wall posed its own set of challenges. The dancers navigated the uneven surface of bricks that are pitted with a square-holed, waffle-like design.

"We were worried, at one point, that the bricks wouldn't support us," said Taffe. "We choreographed a performance that morning that worked with the building and designed movements the bricks could support."

The result was a performance that exhibited controlled grace, replete with bounds, leaps, tucks and poses set to easy jazz songs such as "Triptico" by Gotan Project. This all took place under the afternoon sun by the gleaming muscle of rock climbers and the pointed, articulate toes of dancers.

Squamish Chief, in Sqamish, B.C.—700 metres of vertical granite and a mountain climber's haven—is a special place for Taffe. It's where she spent countless hours working as a climbing guide.

"I called it my office," she said. "It's the mountain closest to my heart." Squamish Chief will be the site of Aeriosa's next big project, a 30-minute documentary that will premiere at the Vancouver International Film Festival in February.

The troupe is familiar with having a video camera on them while they dance. They often film themselves while rehearsing and use the footage to select which moves to incorporate into their act.

CBC Television gave Taffe a camera to capture Aeriosa's experience performing the first vertical dance ever in Taipei, Taiwan. The film, "Taffe in Taipei," was aired on CBC's *Zed*. It captured Taffe and another dancer leaping across a rock face trailing long, orange scarves while Taffe's voice spoke in the background: "A lot of my work is inspired by mountains, by their beauty, their scale, their permanence. I love the image of myself as tiny human attached the earth connected by a thread of just rope, way out there and totally free."

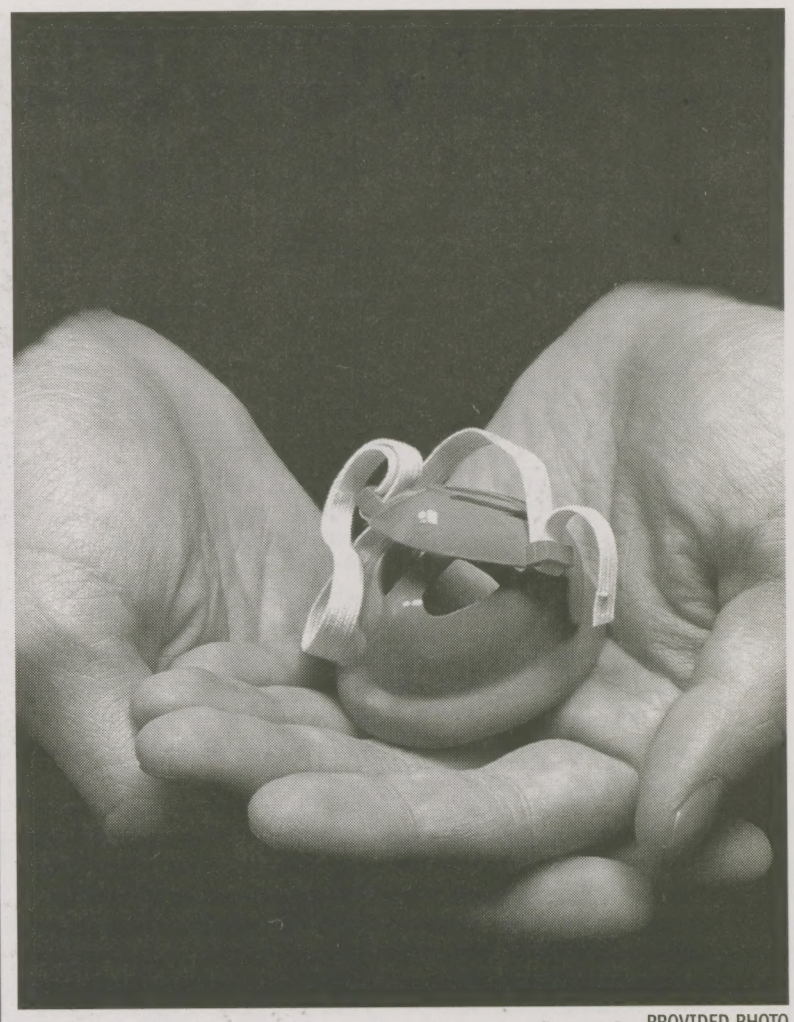
For Taffe, Aeriosa is not just about drawing large crowds or being at the centre of the public eye. Creating art and working closely with nature is part of her personal journey as well

In hindsight, I wouldn't have wanted to be the one who stood in the way of this troupe and their breakfast. I found out from Taffe why they were so famished. Besides performances being an intense workout, the harnesses can disrupt their digestive organs, making them extremely cautious about eating before performing. This is why the group was heading out for breakfast, even though it was two o'clock in the afternoon.

Taffe gave FolkFest staff and volunteers rave reviews, but was more excited about the food in Victoria.

"At Re-bar I ordered the chipolte Caesar with prawns and avocado, the seafood club with a salad, and their chocolate cake came home with me in a box."

There goes the myth that dancers don't eat—and the myth that humans can't fly.



PROVIDED PHOTO

"Dust Mask," from the current Bill Burns exhibit.

Safety gear for small animals

by Carley Fortune

Behind the glass doors of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria's Centennial Gallery, tiny pieces of safety equipment and musical instruments are laid out carefully on tables covered by blue blankets.

Framed watercolours lean against a stark white wall waiting to be hung. Ladders are moved, hammers bang and straightedges are on-hand nearby. This is the scene of the preparation for artist Bill Burn's exhibit, *Safety Gear for Small Animals*. The show, which runs until September 17, opens on July 13 and is part of the gallery's *Terra Firma* series.

The series includes six exhibitions that examine our relationship with the land. Burns' works take an ecological and environmental approach that explores animal rescue, relocation and rehabilitation and includes photos, conceptual art pieces, watercolours, hankies and books.

A tiny respirator available in sizes small through large, may seem like a whimsical way to tackle environmental issues, but Burns is more concerned with sparking ideas within people.

"I'm not sure that art can really change things," he says, "but I'd like people to go away thinking about stuff."

Burns grew up in Saskatchewan as the ninth of 10 children in a Catholic family wrought with illness. His older brother died of pneumonia when he was a boy, causing his parents to put Burns and his younger brother Mike in an oxygen tent, where they spent a large chunk of time during the following years. In the tent were books about animals, some written by Saskatchewan's Grey Owl, and statues of animal-loving saints.

It was the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis and Burns and Mike were mostly concerned about how to protect the prairie animals from nuclear war.

When he was a little older, Burns' father took him on an adventure to visit Grey Owl's cabin north of Saskatoon.

Upon finding a plaque with the details of the environmentalist and novelist's life, rather than the man himself (Grey Owl had died decades earlier), Burns was distraught.

His father told him to turn the setback into a stepping-stone and the boy decided he'd have to help animals, like his heroes Grey Owl and St. Francis of Assisi.

"Some people don't think [the gear] will necessarily help animals," says Burns. "But when I'm around, I can easily persuade them it can be helpful." If you've ever seen road kill, you'll know that the most vulnerable part of the animal is the head, Burns explains. The tiny yellow hard hat is useful in protecting against these accidents.

"We try to make our safety gear as brightly coloured as possible," he says.

A portion of the exhibit entitled, "How to Help Animals Escape from Degraded Habitats," displays miniature receptacles (like a saxophone with a snake inside), that would lend themselves well to transporting animals out of harmful environments, without raising the suspicion of custom officials, and into a zoo. Burns has also created a manual, complete with a five-step program, to go with the drums, speakers, guitars and other miniscule objects handy for relocating animals.

Burns, who completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts at UVic, has been particularly impressed with a group of Victorians who volunteered their time to build four fish ladders for salmon in a small creek. It's the kind of action Burns hope his work inspires.

"I consider this to be my cause," Burn says looking around the room. "I hope it's for the good."

ALEX GILLETT PHOTO

Spectators check out the offerings of artists at PRMNT MRKR's recent show at the Sunset Room.

Victoria artist collective launches *The Feast*

by Alex Gillett

About 30 contemporary artists were given an empty space, five days and the freedom to collectively create. The result? A refreshing blend of convention-defying art.

This is what happened during the first week of July when local and international artists got together to create *The Feast*, the fourth in a series of shows organized by Victoria artistic collective, PRMNT MRKR.

At the show's opening on July 7, paintings, graffiti, projections, sculpture and photography filled the waterfront Sunset Room, behind Value Village.

But the show is just one half of *The Feast*. A 170-page book of the same title has also been produced, featuring black and white contributions from many of the artists whose work appeared in the gallery. Thirty-six local and 15 international artists' writing and art, chosen from an online call for submissions, are included.

Harley Smart, the book's co-producer, says all he needed to do was ask, and suddenly his favourite artists were sending him work to be included in the book and the show.

"The book is a forum for artists to engage with each other, share their work, get inspired, learn about distribution, and in the process, expose the exchange to those interested, in the wider public," says Rohan Stritch, the book's copy editor.

The gallery portion of *The Feast* also provided artists with an opportunity to work together.

"When you get everyone together jamming on the painting, you come up with some pretty interesting stuff," says Shawn O'Keefe, co-producer and book contributor. People at the show's opening agreed.

"I like the blend of mediums," says viewer Christina Tahmasebi, pointing to a fusion of painting and photography.

Works varied enormously in size, shape and medium. Idyllic, glossy acrylic paintings of Chinatown hung beside a large wooden installation, while poetry-covered "missiles" hung from the ceiling.

"You don't see this work in enough venues around town," says Chris Shannon, another showgoer.

This could be due to the fact that there are simply not enough spaces for emerging contemporary artists to show their work in Victoria, a predicament Smart and O'Keefe hope to help solve.

"Artists create. They will do so whether or not they have a gallery to hang their work or a publication to showcase it," says O'Keefe. "We want to give our friends another venue that enables them to create with direction and purpose, a comfortable environment that fuels their creativity."

Can we expect a follow-up to *The Feast* in the future? Smart and O'Keefe think so.

"Every year hopefully more people will come out," says O'Keefe.

Maltwood art show is 'really energizing'

by Benjamin Moore

Tucked away in a corner of the University Centre's main foyer, the Maltwood Gallery is meant to be a quiet haven, safe from the bustle and noise of campus life. But its current exhibit, which showcases the work of over 30 local painters and sculptors, is a collection of colour and contour that could hardly be referred to as quiet.

Aluminations, presented by the alumni association of the Victoria College of Art (VCA), exhibits the work of 33 VCA graduates from 2005 and earlier, many of whom have gone on to find success in both the national and international arts communities.

The group show, which is the fourth of its kind to be hosted at the Maltwood, will run until August 3, 2006.

"When you're looking at this artwork you're seeing a huge range of lifestyles and perspectives," says Kerry Mason, acting curator for the Maltwood and the organizer of *Aluminations*. "There's work from teenagers, young mothers, single fellows and even one artist who's in her 80s."

Mason, who has served as the Maltwood's curator since December 2005, and who also teaches history in art at UVic, says the current exhibit has been a pleasure to host.

"The work, without exception, has a good foundation of technical ability and talent," she says, scanning the walls as though to confirm the statement. "There's something really energizing about each piece, so I'm thrilled with it."

As she slowly moves about the room Mason describes what she sees in each work, taking on an air of maternal pride as she points out the various choices—some subtle, some bold—made on the part of the artists. Contributors were left free to determine the dimension and nature of their submissions, and the result is a feast of texture and colour that includes both sculpture and painting.

"Seemingly quite disparate work can be brought together when you start looking at the lines and the palette," says Mason, explaining how she overcame the challenge of hanging so many different artists side by side. And sure enough, a common thread can be found between all of the work, whether in a shared hue or a hint of movement carried from one canvas to the next.

Unfortunately, it's an effect few have turned out to see, something Mason partially attributes to the limited exposure experienced by the Maltwood around UVic. The warm weather may also play a role, she admits. Though works from the gallery's extensive collection are scattered throughout the campus, students may fail to associate the artwork they see with the gallery itself.

"I think that people aren't really aware that this is here just for them," she says, smiling. "I really want them to think of [the Maltwood] as just another resource for them. They can come in and have a little haven, and in so doing they're adding to their education as well."

Mason has been active organizing student-volunteers for the gallery and encouraging instructors from all faculties to incorporate the Maltwood in their teaching. While there has been some response, the level of involvement played by the gallery within the university has yet to reach its potential.

Though her time at the Maltwood ends in February 2007 with the return of its regular curator Caroline Riedel, Mason intends to continue her involvement with the gallery in whatever capacity she can. The challenge of enticing an audience remains, but with Mason's contagious passion for art and relentless devotion to her students, the curator appears up to the task.

"I think of it mostly in terms of encouraging students to come in and have firsthand experience with the artwork," she says, turning slowly to take in the full picture of the room. "It's meant to entertain, engage, stimulate, and sometimes to provoke. I think it's an important part of the university experience."

HELP WANTED

Western Canada Wilderness Committee is now **hiring** door-to-door canvassers. If you are intelligent, articulate and passionate about the environment, please apply. FT/PT 388-9292.

CIGARETTE SMOKERS Ages 20-54 Required for Market Research Focus Groups $$ paid if selected. Call 604-640-0658.

FOR HIRE

ROOF & GUTTER INSPECTION, REPAIR, REROOFING, DEMOSSING AND POWERWASHING. Call: 380-5685.

SERVICES

Two wrongs don't make a write! Get an experienced editor to accept your pain at pto_edit@yahoo.ca www.pto-editing.com 250-381-8650.

ON CAMPUS EVENTS

FREE BBQ! JULY 26, Starts at 2:30 p.m. outside ELW lobby. Meat and vegetarian food available. Hosted by the **CSCU, WCS AND IEEE.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Victoria Biodiesel Co-op Fundraiser Green-Powered Music, featuring "Biodiesel; A Petrol-Free Opera!" Fundraiser to Help Found The Victoria Biodiesel Co-op. Sunday, July 30, 8 p.m. Alix Goolden Hall (900 Johnson St.). Tickets $10, Available at the Door and in advance. For More Info: 598-5991.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Interested in volunteering in radio? Behind the scenes or on-air? CFUV 101.9 FM is UVic's campus/community radio station broadcasting from the campus at 2290 watts of power. We are looking for those interested in producing or helping out in regards to public affairs, native student, women or queer issues but everyone is welcome to apply. Contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Kate Hollefreund at vol4cfuv@uvic.ca or drop by the station in the SUB, RMB006, Monday to Friday 10-5 p.m.

AWARDS— We're looking for 2006 ETHICS IN ACTION six innovative buisnesses and one courageous individual to present the award to. GOT ANYONE IN MIND? For more info. contact: Barbara Ashton. Director Marketing and Communications. Ph: 604-805-5869. blashton@telus.net

UVIC PRIDE VOLUNTEERS! Meet fun folk, help out in the community, compare fashionable frippery. Staff the office, mosey to events, or just join the list serve. uvicpride@uvss.uvic.ca

Royal BC Museum Do you have a passion for learning and a talent for sharing your knowledge with others? If so, join the fabulous team of Docents at the Royal BC Museum. Help visitors discover the wonders of our province, through interactive school programs or guided adult tours. Applications accepted until August 30. Training begins September 5. For more information regarding these volunteer opportunities please contact Volunteer Services at 387-7902 or visit our website at www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca.

Want a fun and meaningful volunteer opportunity? THE COMMUNITY ACTION ON AIDS/ VIDEA PUBLIC ART INSTALLATION is looking for help decorating flags and installing the project in August. For more information contact Chloe at craxlen@uvic.ca

Oxfam Canada & VIDEA present: GLOBAL JUSTICE YOUTH SYMPOSIUM August 19, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Fairfield Community Place, 1330 Fairfield Rd. Workshops: AIDS, Sweatshops, Food Security and more. Register or Volunteer: chrish@oxfam.ca or call 385-2333

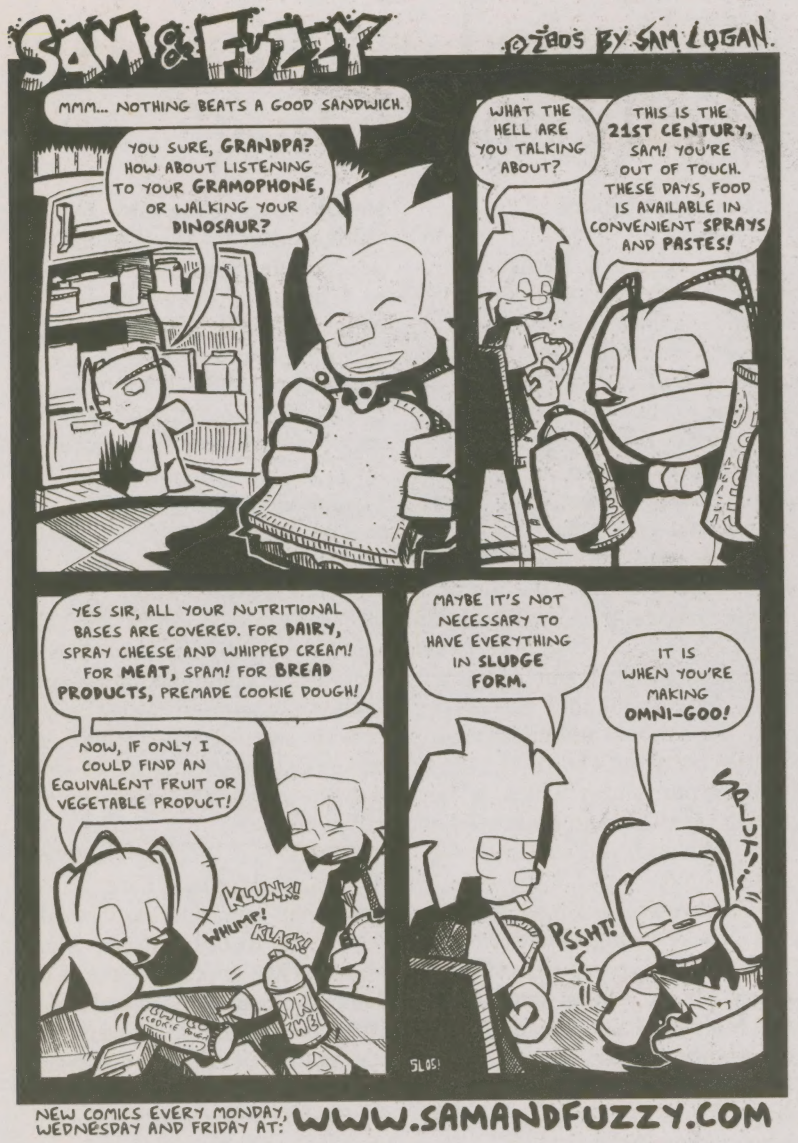
ACCOMODATIONS WANTED

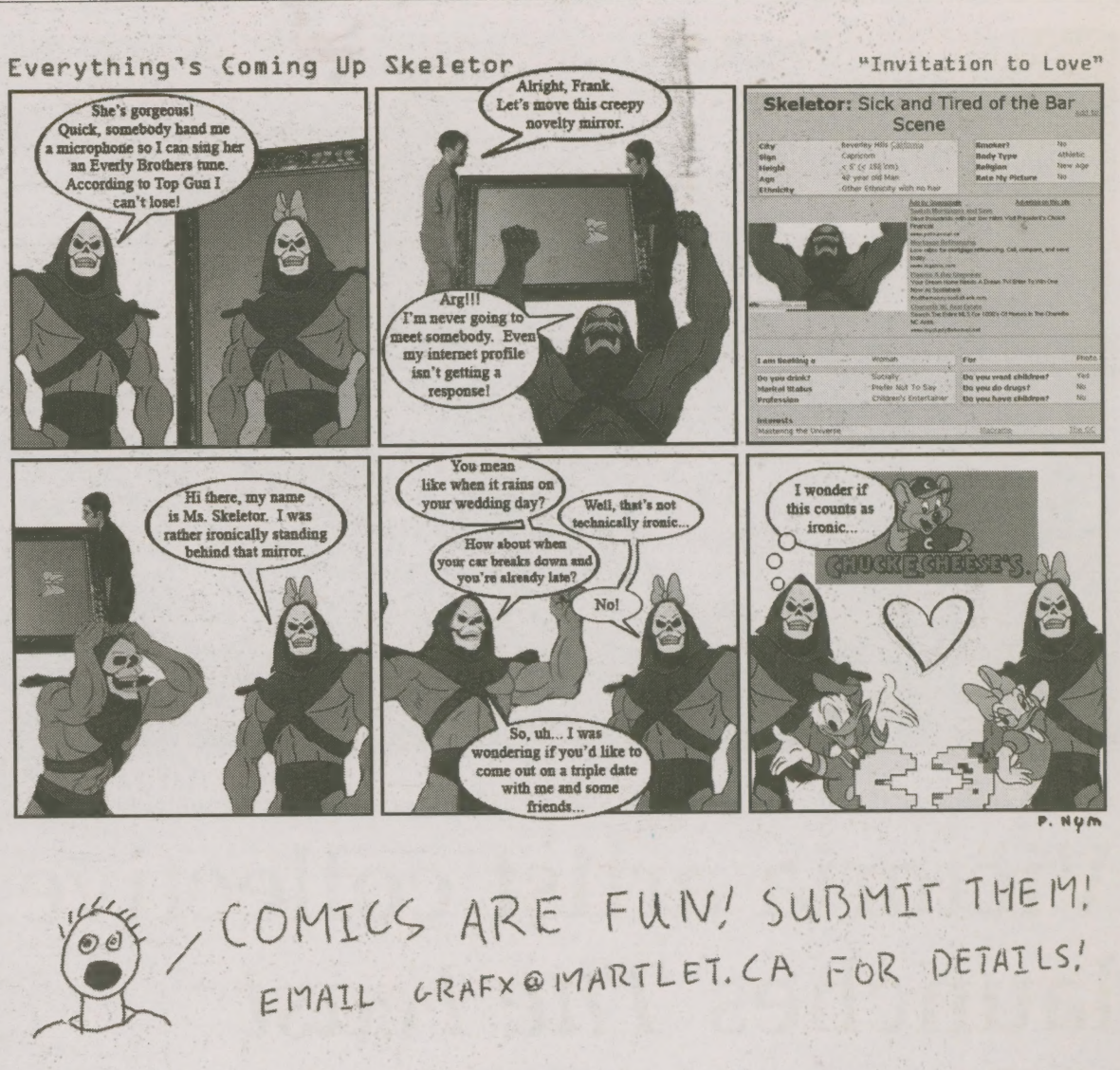
Furnished Apt. wanted for September for working couple in downtown Victoria. $1000 a month or less. Call: 516-7743.

HEY YOU!

Pookie, you are my wookie, i love the nookie. xoxoxo

A message to the non-fucked drivers of Victoria: If someone almost hits you, cuts you off, or does some other careless action—Honk at them! Yell! Do something that lets them know it's not acceptable. Road rage **is** appropriate sometimes.


SAM & FUZZY
©2005 BY SAM LOGAN
MMM... NOTHING BEATS A GOOD SANDWICH.
YOU SURE, GRANDPA? HOW ABOUT LISTENING TO YOUR GRAMOPHONE, OR WALKING YOUR DINOSAUR?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
THIS IS THE 21ST CENTURY, SAM! YOU'RE OUT OF TOUCH. THESE DAYS, FOOD IS AVAILABLE IN CONVENIENT SPRAYS AND PASTES!
YES SIR, ALL YOUR NUTRITIONAL BASES ARE COVERED. FOR DAIRY, SPRAY CHEESE AND WHIPPED CREAM! FOR MEAT, SPAM! FOR BREAD PRODUCTS, PREMADE COOKIE DOUGH!
NOW, IF ONLY I COULD FIND AN EQUIVALENT FRUIT OR VEGETABLE PRODUCT!
KLUNK!
WHUMP!
KLACK!
MAYBE IT'S NOT NECESSARY TO HAVE EVERYTHING IN SLUDGE FORM.
IT IS WHEN YOU'RE MAKING OMNI-GOO!
SPLUT!
PSSHT!
SLOS!
NEW COMICS EVERY MONDAY, WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY AT: WWW.SAMANDFUZZY.COM


Everything's Coming Up Skeletor
"Invitation to Love"
She's gorgeous! Quick, somebody hand me a microphone so I can sing her an Everly Brothers tune. According to Top Gun I can't lose!
Alright, Frank. Let's move this creepy novelty mirror.
Arg!!! I'm never going to meet somebody. Even my internet profile isn't getting a response!
Skeletor: Sick and Tired of the Bar Scene
Hi there, my name is Ms. Skeletor. I was rather ironically standing behind that mirror.
You mean like when it rains on your wedding day?
Well, that's not technically ironic...
How about when your car breaks down and you're already late?
No!
So, uh... I was wondering if you'd like to come out on a triple date with me and some friends...
I wonder if this counts as ironic...
CHUCK E. CHEESE'S
P. NYM

COMICS ARE FUN! SUBMIT THEM!
EMAIL GRAFX@MARTLET.CA FOR DETAILS!